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Castro Hints He Will Negotiate on Prisoners

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 2

Premier Fidel Castro agreed today to the formation in Havana of a committee of families of Cuban political prisoners, apparently as the first step toward negotiating their release.

Dr. Castro's agreement was reported in a cablegram to a Miami families' committee from Charles O. Porter, a former Democratic Representative from Oregon, who went to Cuba on a magazine reporting assignment and on behalf of the group of prisoners' relatives.

Mr. Porter said in his message to Mrs. Consuelo Valverde, president of the Miami-based Committee for Amnesty of Political Prisoners, that he conferred with Premier Castro for five hours today and expected

to meet with him again tomorrow.

The move toward negotiating freedom for the tens of thousands of political prisoners believed to be held in Cuba appeared to follow the pattern of last year's negotiations for the release of the prisoners captured in the April, 1961, invasion of Cuba.

Others Freed for Supplies

At that time, the release of the invasion prisoners was obtained through personal negotiations with Dr. Castro by James B. Donovan, a New York lawyer, representing the Cuban Prisoners' Families Committee in the United States. The men were freed in exchange for \$52

million worth of medicine and food.

Mr. Porter, who also is a lawyer, did not indicate what conditions, if any, Dr. Castro presented for negotiating the release.

Premier Castro, however, has always taken the view that Cuba must be compensated for the damage caused by what he describes as "counterrevolutionaries" if their prison terms are to be ended. Many of the political prisoners have been found guilty of specific acts against the Government, but others have been held, sometimes for years, without charges or without standing trial.

If, as he did in the case of the invasion prisoners, Dr. Cas-

tro sets a price for the release of each prisoner, or demands an equivalent amount of food or other products, the committee may be faced with an unsurmountable problem of collecting ransom funds.